



by Christian Klusman



The TV incarnation of Captain America was a pilot for a series that never got picked up. Due to semi-strong ratings, a second television movie was made, but the series never got any farther. Several stories surround this TV series, as they do the notorious *Dr. Strange* TV pilot as well. It seems that CBS had an idea to combine several live-action super-heroes into a sort of cyclical television show, with a different hero being the focus each week. Captain America and Dr. Strange were two of the heroes being considered. Unbelievably enough, the Human Torch was also one of them (oh, what I would have given to see a low-budget 70s TV show/movie about a superhero who lights himself on fire!).

There are several reasons why this idea could have been scrapped. As fans of the live-action *Amazing Spider-Man* no doubt know, that show actually received fairly good ratings; it was dropped primarily because CBS had a certain amount of reluctance at being known as the "Super Hero Network." This may have played a part in the demise of the random super-hero series. It is also quite possible that the ratings for *Captain America* dropped heavily during the airing of the second pilot, and with *Dr. Strange* turning out to be somewhat of a lame bore, it didn't seem like a cost-effective series. Whatever the reasons, we are stuck having only two Captain America TV movies. This isn't necessarily a bad thing.

*Captain America* begins with ex-military man Steve Rogers (muscle-bound Reb Brown, whom all *MST3K* fans will recognize as Slab Beefrock, of *Space Mutiny* fame) traversing the highways and byways of America. It seems that after a number of years in the military, Steve has had enough of playing the yes man to Uncle Sam. Instead, he has decided to buy a van, wear a shirt two sizes too small, and drive aimlessly around the country drawing pictures of things. Steve's only real plan thus far is taking a meeting with an old friend of his father, Jeff Hayden, who seems to be in dire need of help. Meanwhile, Steve is also being pursued doggedly by Simon Mills (played by Len Birman, sort of a cross between Dick Clark and Casey Kasem). Mills seems to need Steve for something important as well. While driving around, Steve is intentionally run off of a pre-oiled road and his van rolls down a mountain hill. Suffering only a ripped shirt, Steve walks away from his demolished van, gets on his motorcycle (which was hitched to the back) and seemingly forgets about the entire incident.

Despite the fact that friend of the family Hayden needs Steve desperately, Steve decides to visit stranger Simon Mills first at the National Security Laboratories, a division of the United States government. It seems that Mills is actually Dr. Simon Mills, who used to work very closely with Steve's father (the original Captain America, sort of). A while back, Steve's father (never mentioned by name) developed a serum from his own adrenal gland called FLAG (Full Latent Ability Gain). FLAG had the ability to heighten one's senses beyond the pinnacle of their ability, allowing a person superior strength, vision, etc. However, the only successful recipient of FLAG was Steve's father; every living creature that has been injected with the FLAG serum since has gone mad and died within two weeks. Mills has the brilliant idea that Steve may be the only one who can withstand the FLAG serum due to the similarity of his body chemistry to his father. Therefore, Mills inquires as to whether or not Steve would be willing to go through some testing. Steve flatly declines, insisting that he would rather remain a directionless wanderer.



Finally deciding to visit his friend in need, Steve finds it's too late; Hayden has been murdered in his home. After answering a suspicious call regarding the murder and, after being made aware of a secret rendezvous that will make everything clear, Steve takes off on his motorcycle and is once again run off the road. This time, his roll down the mountain hill elicits more than a ripped shirt. He remains in critical condition at the National Security Labs (although why he's not in a regular hospital and how Mills learned of any of this is not explained). As a last resort to keep him alive, Mills administers the FLAG serum to Steve's dying body. Needless to say, Steve perks right up, albeit slightly pissed that the serum was used without his permission. Due to his potential newfound strength and abilities, Simon Mills offers Steve a comfy government job in which he can fight bad guys all day. Steve decides to think this over, but while recovering, he is

kidnapped by armed thugs who take him to a meat packing plant to interrogate him. It is during this interrogation that Steve's heightened senses make themselves known. He dispatches the thugs handily using sides of beef as deadly weapons.

After this brush with trouble, Steve realizes that he needs to work with Simon. Thrilled at hearing this news, Simon presents Steve with his refurbished van; it is now utilized with a secret compartment featuring a brand new rocket assist motorcycle with a detachable shield on the front (don't get too excited yet, costume purists). Steve tries out the high-powered motorcycle, evading bad guys in a surprise attack, and decides that crime fighting is definitely for him. Clearly, Simon is pleased, but there is one final detail to attend to. Since Steve's attackers now know that he has been dosed with the FLAG serum, Steve needs to remain anonymous by wearing a costume (but wouldn't any semi-intelligent bad guy be able to figure out that the super-strong guy with the tacky costume is Steve Rogers?). Finally, adorned with his shiny spandex costume and plexiglass-looking shield, Captain America has arrived.



I would be remiss if I gave away the exciting ending. Suffice it to say that before he actually helps anyone, Captain America almost ends up annihilating the entire state of Arizona with a neutron bomb. It is only thanks to Cap's sidekick Simon Mills that Phoenix and its nearby vicinities are not wiped off the face of the earth. Regardless, in his superhero debut, Captain America has saved the day, thanks to the help of somebody much smarter than he.